

# BASIC INCOME & CARE FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS

## REPORT

of workshop 'Reflections on Basic  
Income & Care Project for Transgender  
Persons' held in June, 2024

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **Project Overview:**

The project, 'Basic Income and Care for Transgender Persons', was launched by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies and India Network for Basic Income (INBI Foundation) in January 2023 with support from the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and collaboration with the Basic Income Earth Network's (BIEN) Asia Pacific hub. The aim was to pilot unconditional basic income for the transgender community in Hyderabad as a radical social policy intervention.

## **Key Objectives:**

1. Provide Universal Basic Income (UBI) to transgender persons.
2. Facilitate Care Workshops to create spaces of connection, solidarity, and care among participants.

## **Implementation:**

- Ten transgender persons received a UBI of Rs 7000 (USD 84) per month for 12 months.
- Six Care Workshops were conducted, five in-person and one online.

- Emphasis was placed on maintaining the confidentiality of participants and project processes.

### **Participant Experiences:**

- Financial Relief: UBI helped participants pay for utilities, travel, and food, easing financial stress.
- Health and Nutrition: The income supported physical health and nutritional needs, especially during transitions.
- Labour Choices: UBI allowed participants to pursue education, upskill, and take breaks for personal growth.
- Community and Relationships: Care Workshops fostered self-expression and nurtured relationships, with participants sharing positive experiences like pedicures, meditation, and journaling.

### **Project Team Workshop Reflections:**

The team highlighted themes such as the inevitability of basic income with advancing AI and automation, the importance of unconditionality and universality, and shared personal unlearning experiences.

## **Policy Roadmap:**

The workshop opened for policy suggestions and feedback, focusing on:

- Support for transgender persons transitioning between jobs and undergoing sex reassignment surgery.
- The need for better law enforcement sensitivity and understanding of unconditional financial support.
- Addressing gender-based violence and improving education and care support systems.
- Conducting a sensitive census of transgender persons, potentially alongside a Caste Census.
- Addressing misrepresentation in media, ensuring continuous communication with the state, and issuing identity cards.
- Advocating for horizontal reservation in public employment and education.
- Renewing and effectively utilizing the Transgender Welfare Board funds.
- Budgetary allotment for mass sensitization on LGBTQI+ issues.

**This Report encapsulates the project's background, and methodology, along with participant experiences, and future policy directions aimed at improving the lives of transgender persons through basic income and comprehensive care, brought together at the Workshop.**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The initial session began with the team introducing the project, '**Basic Income and Care for Transgender Persons**' and its background and methodology employed in implementation. The project was jointly launched by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies and India Network for Basic Income (INBI Foundation) in January 2023 with the transgender community in Hyderabad. The project was implemented with the financial support of the American Jewish World Service (AJWS). The Basic Income Earth Network's (BIEN) Asia Pacific hub has collaborated with the project on the research advocacy front in view of advocating intervention on a global scale. The aim of the project was to pilot unconditional basic income with the transgender community as a radical social policy intervention.

Dr Uma Maheshwari Brughubanda, President of Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies, Hyderabad, in her opening remarks, shared the evolution of Anveshi's engagement with gender issues and now transgender community. She laid emphasis on the rise of care discourses in gender studies, rooting the solutions to discrimination against transgender persons in the principles of care.



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The presidential address was followed by Dr Sarath Davala, the coordinator of the project, introducing the idea of Unconditional Basic Income and the current scenario of basic income advocacy at the global level. He cited how UBI pilots across the world are disproving the different streams of resistance against the idea of basic income. He then delved into the details of the project.

Ten transgender persons were provided a Universal Basic Income (UBI) of Rs 7000 per month (USD 84) for a period of 12 months. Self-selection (whoever identifies themselves as a transgender person) was the criterion for applying for the project. Accompanying the cash transfers, Care Workshops were conducted, that aimed to create spaces of connection, solidarity and care between and amongst participants.

Although the program was imagined as a **Cash-plus-Care** intervention, attending Care Workshops was voluntary, not a condition. Six such comprehensive care workshops were facilitated by the project team during the project period, five in-person and one online. In this context, the power of cash transfer as a trust transfer was also emphasised. Throughout the project, the confidentiality of the participants and the project processes has been maintained. To ensure this, everyone involved with the project has agreed not to share on social media, any details or data.

John Michael, the manager of the Asia-Pacific hub of Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), spoke about the WorkFREE UBI+ Pilot study, a sibling project of TG-BIC, being conducted in Hyderabad with garbage collectors. He drew parallels in the care aspect of the TG-BIC project and the relational needs-based community organising as the plus element at WorkFREE. Emphasising the need to realise one's scope in social work, he shared that our attempts should not be one that patronises or 'empowers' but one that facilitate self and community growth through mere presence and support. Inviting the attendees to engage with the artwork and quotes by the participants, he shared that the Mandalas symbolically have come to represent a break from the capitalist world that sees human beings merely as labouring bodies. He concluded by discussing about co-creation of safe spaces as a community.



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Artworks, biographical sketches, and mandala fillings have been important parts of the care sessions in the project implementation. Similarly, on the day of the workshop, the attendees were welcome to try their hand at art and mandala work. Several attendees have actively taken up these interesting tasks, the images of which are shared in the report.

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# PANEL DISCUSSION

The introduction of the project was followed by a panel discussion of the participants who shared their experiences with UBI and the care elements of the project. Seven out of the ten participants were a part of this enriching session where they delved into the struggles they endure in their lives as transgender persons, how a basic income helped them ease some of the pressure in their day-to-day hustling and the necessity of devoting time towards taking care of their mental, physical and relational health.



Some participants have shared that the amount received as basic income was useful to pay utilities such as rental expenditures and recurring expenses such as travel and food, relieving them of the constant stress of paying bills. This becomes important as their natal families often do not offer financial support. A participant shared that the basic income from the pilot was useful in taking care of physical health and nutritional needs. This becomes even more important when one goes through transition.

From the views shared by the multiple participants, it became evident that there have been incremental changes in the labour choices of the participants. One participant shared that they were able to stop going for alms seeking. Another shared that they were able to spend on bike-taxi, and autorickshaw for commuting between jobs, whereas before the basic income, they relied on public transport or other travel modes that have not always been pleasant experiences. Without natal familial support, the amount of choice in one's occupation is very limited.

Participants who shared the basic income money with their parents have reflected that it was a moment of pride and joy to also bear the responsibility of family while taking care of oneself. One participant shared that they purchased gold jewellery for their mother who had to mortgage and sell off hers due to financial emergency.

Multiple participants shared that basic income allowed them to pursue education or upskill themselves. One of them even shared that they got the courage to take a break from work and fully focus on studying for government recruitment examinations. Often, almost always transgender persons are not recruited even after qualified for a vacancy. And even if one is recruited, they are not paid on par for the same work put in by a cisgender person. The underpayment forces one to seek other sources of revenue while continuing to put in full-time work for the primary occupation.

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The panellists' faces lit up as they started narrating to the attendees their interesting experiences in the care workshops. The participants shared that those sessions allowed them to just be themselves and actively nurture relationships with each other. One participant has particularly recounted their experience with pedicure, meditation, journaling and care partnership. Everyone agreed that they wish to have more such sessions continued.

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The team that managed the project put forth their own experiences and observations. The themes and threads raised as personal experiences intsing approach of WorkFREE with garbage collectors in Hyderabad. Some experiences from the project contesting the mainstream gender theoretical postulates were discussed. The inevitability of basic income with the dawn of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation was highlighted. Unconditionality and universality have also become two main planks during the discussions. The team also shared their personal unlearning through the span of the project.

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# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?: TOWARDS CO-PRODUCING A RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY AGENDA

Finally, the workshop was opened for policy suggestions and feedback from the audience, adding new perspectives for the team to consider in further course of action. Discussion on the following themes has come up during the questions and responses cum reflections session conducted among the organisers, participants, attendees, students and activists, as follows:

- Transgender persons deserve support as they are made to constantly transition from jobs.
- The sex reassignment surgery also is a major decision. Basic income from the govt has the potential to support transgender persons on a large scale.
- Gender-based violence committed against Transgender persons.
- A discussion on what basic income should be complemented with has taken place, arguing for better and inclusive education.
- While the discussion on cash is important, the establishment and expansion of care support systems is important.

- Need for a census of transgender persons. This could be combined with the proposed Caste Census. The methods, definitions and methodology should be sensitive to the participants and the entire data collection apparatus must be thoroughly sensitised. Those who carry out these censuses must be sensitised.
- Even with the presence of various judgements for the protection of transgender persons, the atrocities against them remain rampant.
- Unfortunately, police are a part of this regular harassment. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, a basic income was given but on the ground level, police have questioned transgender persons as to why they continue with their work of sex work and begging even while they were given a pension by the state. There is insensitivity in the street bureaucracy and the law & order agencies in engaging with transgender persons and gender and sexual minorities in general. The government officials often do not understand that the money is supposed to be unconditional.
- Misrepresentation and problematic portrayal of transgender persons in the mainstream media and entertainment outlets.
- Need for continuous communication for the movement with the state.



- Need for Identity cards issued on a bigger scale and how granting agencies need to be sensitised to the law. Even with the presence of various judgements for the protection of transgender persons, the atrocities against them remain rampant.
- Need for horizontal reservation in public employment and educational institutions.
- How to frame policies without challenging the dignity of the bodies of transgender persons?
- The expiring Transgender Welfare Board in Telangana and the need for renewing it with vigour. The previous board did not meet even once in six months as mandated. The funds for this board are underutilized.
- Need for budgetary allotment for mass sensitisation about issues faced by persons belonging to the LGBTQI+ community.

# TEAM

## Technical Advisory Team

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